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Presented by The Canadian Press

To Royal Commission on Bilingualism
and Biculturalism

1964



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THE CANADIAN PRESS

This presentation outlines the operation of an organization serving almost all Canada's daily newspapers and broadcasting stations with news of Canada and the world. The news in its English and French services has always dealt with the concerns expressed by the two principal language groups in the country. This outline offers no opinion except that when citizens are informed there is an opportunity for a majority to take enlightened decisions about their country's internal and external affairs. CP's own concern has always been to provide the best news service made possible by its resources.

The Canadian Press represents the co-operative effort of more than 100 daily newspapers to give this country's people the news of the world and of Canada in two languages.

The Canadian Press was set up during the First World War when newspapers in all parts of the country needed information about military happenings and Canadian decisions and policies. Its operation since, as a co-operative association of Canada's French- and English-language daily newspapers, has reflected the needs of both groups and, in terms of news, has reported the general and everyday problems of each group to the other--as well as their common problems. This has been done through exchange of news reports on current events among the different regions of the country and through background articles related to news situations. Reports on current news and background stories are part of the daily fare of CP.

At the suggestion of a French-language editorial writer, CP started this year an exchange of editorials between English- and French-language newspapers.

When CP was established in 1917, its 103 charter members included six publishing in the French language all in Quebec. In 1964, 10 of CP's 102 daily newspaper members publish in the French language in three provinces.

From the outset, each member--large or small, French or English--has had one vote in the affairs of the association and in election of directors, even though his share of the association's costs is related to his circulation.

CP's member newspapers have always regarded it as essential that the French-language newspapers be represented fairly in the association's councils. In 1954, when French-language dailies numbered 10 of CP's 91 members, CP's bylaws were amended to increase from two to three the number of French-language directors on the 19-member board. Of the association's 20 presidents over the years, there have been three of the French tongue.

The French-language newspapers of CP have participated in the affairs of the agency through regular communication with its management about news and technical matters and through administrative and news meetings. News representatives of all papers at gatherings held annually in every region of the country have shared in development of the fields of news coverage.

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From the outset, the disadvantage to French-language newspapers of receiving service in the English language was recognized. Problems created by the difference in number between English- and French-language newspapers were approached with friendly understanding.

As an experiment in 1922-23, news was delivered in French to five evening papers but the cost involved proved too great. In 1929 it was agreed that cost to each French-language member should be reduced by about one-quarter as a "translation grant," making allowance for the fact that in using CP news French-language members incurred costs that did not fall upon English-language members.

In 1944, the directors of CP agreed as a matter of policy that news should be delivered in French at the same assessment rates as in English, subject only to agreement on details among the French-language members.

In 1945, four years after the newspaper co-operative decided to put its news resources at the disposal of radio stations, CP established Canada's first news service in French. It was for broadcasting stations which agreed to support the plan and at the start the service went to five French-language radio stations. The total of privately-owned stations in Canada served at that time by CP was 49. Now Broadcast News, the broadcasting arm of The Canadian Press, serves 260 privately-owned radio and TV stations. Its service in French goes to 50 stations in Quebec, three in Ontario and one in New Brunswick.

In 1951, CP's French-language newspapers, following a number of meetings to discuss the many details involved, joined in an experimental French service for newspaper use. It became an established CP service the next year and at its official inauguration in Montreal, the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. St. Laurent, described it as a major event in the country's development.

Service in French for newspapers was distinct from that operated by Broadcast News because an entirely different type of news writing and different transmission schedules were involved. News reports for broadcasting stations are more condensed, their times of use more frequent and writing is styled for listeners rather than readers.

There are two general aspects to news agency operation. The first is obtaining and writing news; the second, its transmission which, in Canada and within its regions, involves lengthy and also costly systems of communications. Skilled technicians are required to ensure that the flow of news, as well as photographs, maps and graphs moved by wire, is not interrupted and that equipment is modern. Both in English and in French CP provides its service in perforated tape for papers requiring automatic typesetting. CP's French teleprinters delivering the news to papers with accented letters represent a pioneering advance that has not yet been duplicated anywhere else. The French Wire is the first and so far the only CP news wire to be converted to high-speed operation, 25 per cent faster than normal.

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The Canadian Press has a staff of 370 of whom 54 are French-speaking. It has eight bureaus across Canada including Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec, and has staff correspondents in seven other cities. Of the editorial staff of 44 at Montreal and Quebec bureaus, 28 are French-Canadians and 11 of the English-language Canadians are bilingual. Most of CP's French-language staff is at Montreal where the two French services-- one for newspapers, the other for broadcasters--are prepared. Growth of French-language staff in recent years has been more rapid than in any other part of the service.

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A French-language newspaper man trained at Quebec heads the newspapers' Service in French, with a staff of 11 at Montreal, compared with six at the start in 1951. CP's chief of bureau at Quebec, who has worked with the agency at Montreal and Ottawa, also is a French-Canadian journalist.

The Broadcast News French-language service is directed by an editor who has been with it almost from its start. The initial editorial staff of three now numbers 12.

Volume of news delivered in French to newspapers averages 45 to 50 columns daily, almost precisely the same volume as sent in English to 18 papers on the East Wire and 32 papers on the West Wire. That for broadcasting averages 25,000 words daily, largely in five- and 15-minute summaries, styled for reading on the air. Each covers regional, provincial, Canadian and international news.

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Consistently over the years The Canadian Press has covered the news of Canada from Ottawa and all the provinces. This has included news of special interest to French Canada and about French Canada.

Despite difficulties of understanding that still exist, CP must feel that its news service has been a medium of exchange of ideas and information not only through transmission of news but also as a result of the meeting-ground it has provided for editors and publishers of the two language groups among whom there are many strong ties.

CP recognizes it is hard to estimate precisely the value of the work it accomplishes by daily exchange across cultural boundaries of honest news at a cost within the reach of all the dailies, even the smallest, whether published in English or in

French. CP has never distributed news for the sake of sensation. Great care has always been taken at all levels of its operation to verify the content of its innumerable news stories. Its high standards have been a credit to Canadian journalism. In addition it acts on behalf of a cross-country newspaper community that represents a variety of opinion and for that reason allows no consideration other than public interest to determine its selection and writing of news. The result of this policy is that the integrity of CP news reports has never been seriously questioned.

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The single objective of The Canadian Press, with the concurrence of the newspapers and broadcasting stations it serves, has been improvement of the scope and quality of its news coverage through the printed word and pictorial illustrations and through voice reports as well as news reports for broadcast. This objective applies to its services whether in one language or the other. Since CP is a co-operative, a great deal of the responsibility for effective exchange of Canadian news among newspapers rests with the newspapers themselves acting through CP.

Through its bureaus at London, New York and Washington, and its correspondents in many countries, CP obtains a great deal of news of special interest to the various parts of Canada including French Canada. But the bulk of its world coverage of course comes from its powerful allies, The Associated Press of the United States and Reuters News Agency of Britain.

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Every effort is made to obtain source copy in the original French on news--especially important quotations--from French-speaking areas whether in Canada or abroad. Otherwise a quotation, translated first into English then back into French, may not resemble the original.

A great deal of Canadian news is delivered to CP by its French-language newspapers as part of their co-operative responsibility to cover the news of their areas. Virtually all of CP's report of the Quebec legislature is written originally in French and the aim is that the entire legislative report be in French, translated at Montreal for English-language newspapers. Since 1959, a French-language correspondent, writing in French, has been stationed at CP's Ottawa bureau. Important meetings in French, anywhere in Canada, are covered by French-writing reporters.

Source coverage in French outside Canada has been more difficult. For many years, CP has been obtaining by special cable the text of important statements in French such as by President de Gaulle. Last year, the situation was improved by obtaining Reuters French Wire, never before extended to this continent. Now the news wire of Agence France-Presse, the French news agency, is available to CP for its French-language members and possibly later to all members.

Thus it is inaccurate to say that CP's Service in French is simply a translation service. Translation from English to French is carried out but CP also translates its own French copy as well as that of its French members for English newspapers. Translation is not a Canadian phenomenon. It is done everywhere in the world in transmission of news between peoples using different languages.

Through The Canadian Press, and the daily newspapers and broadcasting stations it serves, the Canadian people has access to a news service recognized as unexcelled anywhere. No news agency in any other country has such extensive world news sources in addition to an unrivalled domestic news report.

As possible, with the resources at its command, CP will seek to improve on the job it is doing.



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